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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0541
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1865
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1248
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BISHKEK 000504

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CLASSIFICATION - NATO)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [KG](#)
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT STICKING TO PARTY LINE ON BAISALOV
ATTACK

REF: BISHKEK 495

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Lu, reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

11. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 12.

12. (C) SUMMARY: In a series of meetings with Ambassador Yovanovitch to discuss the April 12 attack on civil society leader Edil Baisalov, government officials largely stuck to the party line, calling the assault "an unfortunate incident" and "a provocation" intended to destabilize the country. This line largely hews to the talking points used by President Bakiyev during his only public comments on the attack, made during a government meeting on April 13. No Kyrgyz officials characterized the assault as an attempt to silence or intimidate civil society. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU/REL NATO) On April 14, the Ambassador held separate meetings with and passed an Embassy press release and non-paper (reftel) to National Security Service (SNB) Chairman Tashtemir Aitbayev, National Security Secretary Miroslav Niyazov and Prime Minister Feliks Kulov, and spoke with Foreign Minister Alykbek Jekshenkulov. The Ambassador also met with the Chinese Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, and discussed the Baisalov case with representatives of other OSCE countries represented in Bishkek.

SNB AND MFA: LET'S NOT RUSH TO JUDGMENT

14. (C/REL NATO) SNB Chairman Aitbayev went out of his way to assure the Ambassador that the attack on Baisalov was not a crisis. He said the SNB and Interior Ministry (MVD) were working together to find the person who attacked Edil Baisalov (reftel). He agreed with Ambassador's statement on the important role that civil society plays in Kyrgyz society. Although Aitbayev cautioned against rushing to any conclusions about who might have assaulted Baisalov, he speculated that the attack could have been carried out "by a crazy person." Following the meeting with Aitbayev, Ambassador discussed the attack with Foreign Minister Alykbek

Jekshenkulov over the phone. The FM said he too was alarmed by the criminalization of society, but added that President Bakiyev was "taking control of the situation." Jekshenkulov said that the President had given instructions to the law enforcement bodies to solve this case.

NIYAZOV: WELCOME TO FANTASY ISLAND

15. (C/REL NATO) National Security Secretary Miroslav Niyazov said the attack was regrettable, but urged the Ambassador not to rush to judgment on who might be responsible. Niyazov characterized the incident as a provocation, designed to sow panic in society or even discredit organized crime figure (and frequent target of Baisalov's criticism) Ryspek Akmatbayev. He lamely speculated that the attacker might have mistaken Edil Baisalov for parliamentarian Erkin Baisalov (no relation). Niyazov told the Ambassador that a group of "five or six politicians have seized on the incident to cause panic" and said that "such hysteria (on the part of the politicians) would be understandable coming from women, but for men to behave that way is just embarrassing." Nevertheless, Niyazov said that the MVD would work hard to solve the case. He then reiterated his strong belief that the assault on Baisalov was a "premeditated act designed to create hysteria," and said a rushed investigation is not the best way to solve the case.

16. (C/REL NATO) Warming to the subject, Niyazov then entered into a disjointed but spirited defense of indicted murderer and mafia kingpin Ryspek Akmatbayev. Niyazov claimed that Akmatbayev was the victim of a smear campaign in the media, and repeatedly speculated that the assault on Baisalov had been carried out by someone seeking to discredit Akmatbayev.

Niyazov glanced down at a copy of the Embassy press statement condemning the assault and said, "I'm sure your theory of the crime will be proven wrong soon."

PRIME MINISTER KULOV: ATTACK "POLITICALLY MOTIVATED"

17. (C/REL NATO) Prime Minister Feliks Kulov seemed to be one of the very few senior government officials to understand (or at least admit) the seriousness of the attack. Kulov visited Baisalov in the hospital only hours after the attack, and in an April 13 government meeting he called the assault "politically motivated." Kulov told the Ambassador he is "deeply concerned" about what is happening in the country, and said that he has demanded from the law enforcement agencies a concerted effort to find the people responsible for the attack on Baisalov.

18. (C/REL NATO) Referring to an April 7 statement by the Russian MFA expressing muted concern over Ryspek Akmatbayev's impending election to parliament, Kulov said that he had told President Bakiyev "this is the first time in history that the U.S., Russia, and Kazakhstan have had a common position on Kyrgyzstan and the need to tackle organized crime." Kulov said the Russian Government had never expressed such concerns before.

MVD: ASSAULT WAS A MURDER ATTEMPT

19. (C/REL NATO) On April 14, while two Embassy FSNs visited Baisalov in the hospital, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Omurbek Suvanaliyev came in to update Baisalov on the investigation. He told Baisalov in the presence of the FSNs that the assault was a murder attempt, and not intended solely to intimidate him. Suvanaliyev said that the likely weapon used, a piece of pipe wrapped in newspaper, was the murder weapon of choice for inmates in Kyrgyz prisons.

DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY: OUTRAGE, YES. ACTION, MAYBE

110. (C/REL NATO) On April 14, the Ambassador met with the

Chinese Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan. The Chinese Ambassador agreed that the attack was aimed at intimidating all of Kyrgyz civil society. However, when Ambassador Yovanovitch suggested raising this point with the Kyrgyz government, the Chinese Ambassador balked, saying such action would be premature. The Chinese Ambassador also stated his personal view that mobster Ryspek Akmatbayev was somehow linked to either President Bakiyev or the Presidential Administration.

¶11. (C/REL NATO) In a separate session, the Ambassador met with representatives of other OSCE countries to discuss the attack (the Russians were notably absent from the meeting). Everyone present agreed with the Ambassador's assessment that the assault was aimed at silencing civil society in general. OSCE Ambassador Markus Muller said his mission would begin drafting a statement. The German Ambassador (also representing the EU) said he had suggested the EU chair issue a statement, but worried that the impending Easter break could get in the way. The Kazakh Counselor (in place of the Ambassador, who was out of town) gave a scathing assessment of the current situation in Kyrgyzstan. However, he was unwilling to take any further action, including asking Astana to express its concern to the Kyrgyz government.

¶12. (C) Post requests the Department ask the Kazakhs to approach the Kyrgyz and express their own well-founded concerns to the Kyrgyz over the attack on Edil Baisalov, as well as the growing and destabilizing role played by organized crime groups in Kyrgyzstan.

¶13. (C) COMMENT: Although certainly disappointing, Niyazov's defense of Akmatbayev was hardly surprising. Besides President Bakiyev himself, no other government

official has done more to publicly and privately defend Akmatbayev since he first slithered into the public eye last October. Fortunately, Niyazov appears to have little influence these days in Bakiyev's inner circle. Aitbayev's disappointing statements were also not surprising, given widespread rumors that he is somehow linked to Akmatbayev.

¶14. (C) COMMENT CONT'D: More disturbing is the government's seemingly total lack of understanding of (or willingness to admit) the assault's larger significance. Instead, Aitbayev and Niyazov denied even the possibility that the attack on Baisalov was intended to silence his outspoken criticism of organized crime and the government. They also stubbornly refused to admit that organized crime is obviously out of control, or that there is a need to defend Kyrgyzstan's vibrant yet fragile civil society. Instead, these officials drew out President Bakiyev's comments to a ridiculous degree, spinning fantasies and denying reality in a futile attempt to divert attention from the fact that the government lacks the political will necessary to confront organized crime.
YOVANOVITCH